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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet for parents describes the important influences of music on the cognitive development of infants and toddlers under the age of three years. The pamphlet focuses on three aspects of music: (1) bonding with one's child through music; (2) learning through melodies and movement; and (3) the music-creativity connection. For each aspect, the pamphlet describes what parents can expect from their infant and toddler at various ages, describes how music can contribute to the particular area of child development, presents questions for parents to help them see how music has influenced their own lives, and offers suggestions for ways parents can use music effectively. The pamphlet concludes by reiterating that through music, children connect with their feelings and come to understand and delight in the world around them. A list of additional resources from Zero to Three is included. (KB)

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Getting in Tune

The Powerful Influence of Music on Young Children's Development

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Music!

It's early evening and time for bed. Baby, fresh from her bath, is snuggled up with Mom in a rocking chair. Mom softly sings a familiar song, as the rocking chair sways back and forth, back and forth. Baby sighs, closes her eyes, and drifts off...

Twenty-seven-month-old David is listening to a music tape. He jumps up and starts to dance and sing along to "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Dad smiles at his son's delight and joins in. David grabs Dad's hands and they twirl around the room together.

Music has a power that goes beyond words. The pleasure of sharing music builds connections between parent and child as sounds and rhythms surround the child in a world of sensations and feelings. Music also offers a joyful and rewarding learning experience and nurtures a child's imagination and creativity.

Music is everywhere—in the clap of hands; the coo of a baby; the sound of the wind moving through the trees and raindrops falling on a roof; and, most of all, in the treasured songs of your family. No special lessons or fancy equipment are necessary to enjoy music. It's all there...in you and your baby...waiting to be shared.

"Where words fail, music speaks"

– Hans Christian Andersen

The Language of Love:

Bonding

With Your Child Through Music

The first three years of a child's life are a very special time during which parents and babies can make beautiful music together and can use this music to build powerful connections with each other. The mutual joy experienced by parents and children as they share musical moments strengthens their bond. That bond will be a child's model for close relationships throughout life. Connecting with your baby in a musical way just comes naturally. Throughout the world when parents speak to their little ones, they adjust their voices to make them more lyrical, more rhythmic...in short, more musical. When your baby responds, a kind of duet happens, reinforcing the love and trust you share.

Music is also a unique and powerful way for children to connect to their roots. An African-American spiritual, a Yiddish or Irish lullaby, a Mexican folk song... all introduce your baby to the family's heritage in a way that goes beyond words or pictures. And connecting to roots is another way to make a child feel safer and more secure.

Getting in Tune with Yourself

These questions may help you see how music has influenced your life

Do you remember being sung to or listening to music as a child? If so, what was it like? Who sang to you? What did they sing?

How do you think your early experiences with music influence the ways you sing and share music with your child?

Getting in Tune with Your Child

These questions will help you understand how best to share music with your child

How does your child respond to music? Does she make eye contact when you sing? How does her body move? Does she make sounds back to you? Does she let you know she's had enough, perhaps by arching her back or turning away?

What kinds of singing does your child prefer: soft, high- or low-pitched, fast or slow? How does she let you know?

What to Expect

0-9 months:

- Very soon after birth, a baby can pick out his mother's voice from other voices and then, just a little bit later, his father's voice, too. Looking forward to hearing his parents' voices is a sign of his connection to and trust in them.
- Babies actively search out the sound of human voices, especially when they are quieter, high-pitched, and rhythmic.
- Babies attract their parents' attention by imitating their sounds.
- Babies respond to music in many ways, such as by making eye contact when you sing, moving their arms and legs, or turning their heads away when they need a break.

9-18 months:

- Young children love to share music with others. They use sounds, movements and facial expressions to interact.
- A familiar song will help a baby feel safe and secure in an unfamiliar setting. In a sense, songs become every bit as important and powerful as a beloved teddy bear or a blanket.
- Music plays an important role in establishing routines. The same song sung each night at bedtime becomes part of the transition from waking to sleeping.

18-36 months:

- Toddlers love to make up songs and dances by themselves and along with others.
- Toddlers often sing to themselves for comfort. You might hear them singing a lullaby, for example, after you've kissed them goodnight. It's their way of keeping you with them.
- Toddlers will ask you to sing their favorite songs again and again, just as they want their favorite books to be read to them many times over.

What You Can Do

- Above all, sing or hum to your baby! Studies show that babies prefer their parents' voices over anyone else's. No matter how you may think you sound, your baby will be your most eager and adoring audience.
- Babies enjoy watching people move to music. Act out the songs that you sing with your hands and body movements. For instance, on "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," use your fingers to show the spider climbing and the rain falling. As your baby gets older, try something like "Ring Around the Rosy."
- Sing a special lullaby to your baby before she falls asleep, perhaps one that you remember from your own childhood. She will learn to connect this lullaby with sleeptime. This is also a way to share the stories, rhythms, and melodies from generation to generation.
- Dance with your child. Play some musical objects—even a rattle—and dance to the rhythm.
- If your child watches musical videos, watch with her and join in—singing and dancing. You can also use the videos to help her make transitions. For example, tell her that you will leave for work when the train song is over.

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Learning through Melodies and Movement

Music can be the spark that ignites all areas of development— intellectual, social and emotional, motor, language and overall literacy. In fact, music is a great organizer that helps the body and the mind work together. Young children are attracted to musical patterns and structure. They show this in many ways like clapping at the end of songs or making hand motions for special parts, like the mama duck quacking in "Five Little Ducks."

Also, music introduces children to the sounds and meanings of words and helps strengthen memory skills. Alphabet and number songs like "This Old Man" help children remember letter and number sequences. Songs such as "The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round" help children understand how things work.

Music provides an opportunity for your child to interact with other children and loved ones in joyous ways. Because music is such a rich learning experience, the more children are involved with it, the more they learn.

What to Expect

0-9 months:

- Babies are able to recognize familiar melodies long before they understand the meanings of words.
- In a kind of musical "conversation," babies imitate the sounds of their parents through their own cooing and vocalizations. They wait for their turn and respond during pauses in the "dialogue."
- Babies often respond to singing and talking by waving their arms, kicking their feet, and smiling. These are babies' early and very significant communications about their thoughts ("Daddy, I love this. Don't stop") and feelings ("I'm so happy, Mommy. I love being with you").
- Babies catch on quickly, picking up the patterns of movement that accompany songs and dances.

These questions may help you see how music has influenced your life

How do you feel about singing? Are you self-conscious about your voice?
How does this affect how or if you sing to your child?

These questions will help you understand how best to share music with your child

What's your child's favorite song?
What kind of musical experiences does she like best? How do you know? How does she show you what comes next?

9-18 months:

- As soon as they're able, children start to move to the beat.
- Making music together—sing-a-longs, for instance—is a fun way for children of this age to connect to each other, and to learn about the patterns and sequences of music and language in general.
- Children love to fill in the blanks of familiar songs: "Mary Had a Little _____!"
- They love to explore all the ways they can make sounds with their own voices and with objects. This a great way for them to feel confident that they can make things happen.

18-36 months:

- Music builds memory skills, as when a child learns to repeat the words of a song.
- Toddlers love to dance with each other, which reinforces both movement and socialization.
- Toddlers also dance with dolls and stuffed animals, imitating the kind of involvement they have with their own caregivers.
- Young children often make up songs to accompany their activities.
- Toddlers are quick to associate specific songs with specific activities and images. (For example, singing, "Goodbye Miss Tanya, we will miss you so..." when picking a child up from her sitter). This ability to associate songs with activities means children are making a big learning leap. Now they better understand how things are connected and can use music themselves as a way to deal with transitions.

What You Can Do

- When you sing to your baby, watch how he learns. Does he imitate you and eagerly wait for your next gesture and sound? Listen for how your toddler copies the ups and downs of the melody and even some of the lyrics.
- Music and dance go hand-in-hand. Dance with your child to a favorite recording. Make it more interesting by changing your movement when the music changes.
- Toddlers love to play circle games like "Ring Around the Rosy." It is especially fun when you invite one or two friends over to play.
- Play musical games with toddlers, like "Statue" or "Freeze." Make a conga line through your living room with anyone who's around. Use your imagination!
- Music is a great way to make everyday activities more fun and easy. Make up songs about tooth brushing, getting dressed and going to the potty.
- When reading books that rhyme, "sing" the words. Stories can be made more musical with sound effects and instruments.

The Truth About Mozart

There have been no studies with infants or young children showing long-term intellectual gains due to early exposure to classical music. What does nurture development is having sensitive caregivers who expose children to different kinds of sounds and music, and who play what they enjoy. Children and parents can enjoy all types of music together from rock and roll to folk to gospel.

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Just Imagine!

The Music-Creativity Connection

The musical exchange between babies and their parents is a springboard for creativity and imagination. Toddlers enjoy making up nonsense words and new sounds to fit familiar melodies, and they often make up songs to accompany activities. All of this helps develop young minds and goes a long way toward nurturing a love of musical sound and language.

Making up new songs with babies is a perfect way to encourage creativity. For example, songs to accompany everyday routines—such as "Happy Bathtime to You" — use imagination to make these activities more fun.

Music is also a great way for both children and parents to express themselves. Children can vent anger, burst with joy, and everything in between. And many parents find that singing with their children actually calms themselves as well. Music can also serve as a great diversion, such as when you sing a silly song as you strap your resistant toddler into his car seat.

What to Expect

0-9 months:

- Babies wiggle, kick and stretch to the sounds they hear.
- Babies enjoy using things to make sounds, such as banging objects together.
- Babies may babble in response to your singing and what they hear on the radio or TV.

Getting in Tune with Yourself

These questions may help you see how music has influenced your life

- **What effect does music and singing have on you?**
- **How do you use music? For relaxation? To lift your spirits?**

Getting in Tune with Your Child

These questions will help you understand how best to share music with your child

- **How does your child make her own music?**
- **What are other ways, besides singing, that you bring music into your child's life?**

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9-18 months:

- Music builds creative skills. When a child forgets the lyrics, he usually just makes up his own. His lyrics may be an improvement, or, at the very least, a sign of creativity!
- Children are becoming much more mobile and can dance in new, inventive ways.
- Young children sing as they play, using their voices to accompany their activities.
- They will create and imitate musical patterns, such as "doo da, doo da."

18-36 months:

- For many toddlers, life is a musical. They will turn anything into song.
- Older toddlers often come together in free play with instruments to form a kind of band. This signals the development of important social skills as children work together and build friendships.
- Toddlers will experiment with making up their own songs, and connecting them to songs they have already learned. Such as, "I love playing with my dog. E—I—E—I—O."

What You Can Do

- Make music in new and different ways. Sing what you want to say; dance, instead of walk to bed.
- Encourage your child to dance to favorite songs.
- Music can be a good way to draw out the feelings of children. If they're angry, they can let off steam by doing a "Let Me Show You How Mad I Am" dance, complete with whoops, hollers and stomps.
- Create new lyrics for familiar songs. ("Twinkle, Twinkle Little Bear!" or "The Itsy, Bitsy Monkey!")
- Offer lots of materials to create instruments—for example, oatmeal box drums, paper towel roll horns, rice-filled plastic bottles.
- Play instruments to musical tapes or CDs and move along with the music.
- Have props to encourage creative movement, like scarves and batons.

Making Musical Moments Together

Music plays a powerful role in the lives of young children and their parents. Through music, children connect with their feelings and come to understand and delight in the world around them. They do so from their earliest communications with their parents, to their musical play with friends. Singing, and music in general, is a way for friends and family, regardless of age, to be playful and fun, gentle and sweet, happy and loving together.

ZERO TO THREE promotes the healthy development of our nation's babies and toddlers by supporting and strengthening families, communities and those who work on their behalf.

Additional Resources from ZERO TO THREE:

Caring For Infants and Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice – This guide is designed to help early care and education professionals recognize the special knowledge and skills needed to offer very young children a nurturing group care environment.

The Magic of Everyday Moments™* – This brochure series offers parents age-specific suggestions on how to make the most of everyday moments to boost their child's development.

Learning & Growing Together: Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Development* – ZERO TO THREE's first parenting book offers tools that empower parents and caregivers to be their own best resource by helping them understand their child's temperament and think in new ways. Also, excellent resource for group settings.

Learning & Growing Together Tip Sheets – Tip sheets give child care professionals ideas for putting Learning & Growing Together concepts into practice to improve their program and staff's ability to support families.

Little Listeners in an Uncertain World: Coping Strategies For You and Your Child after September 11 – Brochure offers suggestions for helping young children cope with terror and its aftermath and provides ideas on how parents and caregivers can manage their own stress and anxiety.

* Also available in Spanish

This brochure and other ZERO TO THREE resources are available at **www.zerotothree.org** or by calling (800) 899-4301. The Magic of Everyday Moments™ brochures available by calling 877-JNJ-LINK or on-line at ZERO TO THREE's web site.

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Dear Parents:

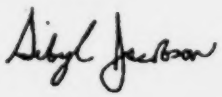
The arts, including music, play an important role in enhancing the quality of life for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Recent research shows that music also contributes to the healthy development of young children. It creates a rich environment that fosters self-esteem and promotes social, emotional and intellectual development.

Young children are first exposed to music through their relationship with you. Through singing, listening, dancing and playing, you help your child grow in important ways.

This brochure discusses the many ways music can enrich your child's life and offers practical tips for bringing music into your home. MetLife Foundation is proud to partner with ZERO TO THREE to bring this brochure to you and support you as you nurture your child in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,



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